



# MESSENGER

*The mission of South Central Conference is to produce healthy, missional congregations by resourcing, connecting and empowering them to be Christ in the world.*

## What do you expect?

Lenten Message by Jeff Blackburn

*Editor's note: This message is reprinted by permission from the Greensburg Mennonite Church newsletter, Outlook, where Jeff serves as pastor.*

Jesus is the light of the world. But darkness doesn't like light—it runs away every time because it is exposed for what it is: darkness. He came to seek and save the lost. Some didn't even know they were lost. He preached the message of the kingdom of heaven. But many wanted only to be rulers of their own little domain. Some thought He was too permissive. Others walked away from Jesus because they thought He demanded too much. He performed numerous miracles so that people would believe that He is the Christ, but they only wanted more miracles.

What are your notions of who Jesus is and what He came to do? Our expectations can cloud our ability to see Jesus for who He is unless they are grounded in Scripture. We may expect things from Him that are not the better and best things He has in mind for us.

Jesus Christ is our one and only foundation. He taught us the mind of God. His teachings aren't confusing, but they aren't easy. When we set out to live them we discover just how radical and life-transforming His ways really are. The radical thing may not be believing in Him—the really radical thing may be obeying Him.

He demonstrated how to live in ways that please God. He always got it right so that we do not have to sort through His actions to uncover which are godly and which aren't—He never sinned. By both word and example He even pulled back the curtain of heaven to show us what God is like.

And we continue to learn. Scripture keeps teaching us Jesus. The Spirit illuminates the Word of God so that we can understand that God has in mind for us to become more like His Son in the way we think, the way we live and even the words that we say.

As you associate with Jesus Christ, what do you expect?

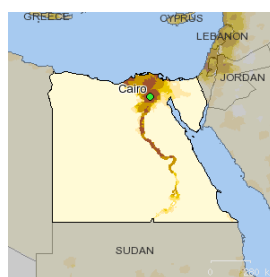
## REPORT FROM EGYPT

by Ben Baumgartner

*Editor's Note: Ben is a junior at Goshen College, majoring in Bible and Religion. He spent several months in Egypt as part of his college work, and shares this report after the recent resistance movement that resulted in the departure of the country's president. Ben is a member of Whitestone Mennonite Church.*

This past fall, I had the opportunity to go to Egypt on Goshen College's Study-Service Term (SST). During SST, students live abroad for a semester, the first half of which is focused on "study," while in the second half students split up to several different locations for "service." Although it's impossible to share all of my stories and experiences while in Egypt, I'll try and give a feel for what it was like to be there and meet the wonderful people that we did.

Our group of 19 students spent the first six weeks in Cairo, the capital of Egypt and a sprawling metropolis inhabited by around 15 million people. Although students in most SST units stay with host families, we were unable to do this, and lived together at Iman House, part of a church compound, in Helwan, a southern suburb of Cairo. While we may not have had host families, those hosting us at Iman House in many ways became like family.



The head chef, 'Adel, looked out for our safety like a parent, while the assistant chefs, Amir and Botros, were like brothers to me. Going to some of the innumerable coffee shops in Helwan, or walking around downtown Cairo with them, are some of my best memories of Egypt, even when our communication was somewhat limited by language. Other memories that stick out to me from life in Cairo include being woken up at 5 am by the call to prayer on a regular basis, daily trips in packed train cars on Cairo's Metro system to Arabic classes, and drinking mango, guava or cane juice at various drink stands.

During the second half of SST, one other student and I took the train six hours south of Cairo to the small city of Qosayih, where we were assigned to help with English classes at the Saint Mena Language School. For the first week we played soccer with the kids, met the teachers, and were shown around the city of Qosayih and to a local monastery by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker we lived with there. While in Qosayih we were hosted by the Coptic Orthodox Church, which is the main Christian group in Egypt, and lived at the seat of the diocese. Here, we regularly got to eat meals with various priests and the leader of the diocese, Bishop Thomas. The priests we met were incredibly friendly, glad to answer any questions we had about the Coptic church, and even liked to joke around quite a bit.

After one week in Qosayih, Bishop Thomas had us take a seven-hour bus ride to Anafora, a Coptic retreat center he helped start, to help with the construction of a stone model of Jerusalem. These were a great two weeks that included chiseling small stone buildings, playing soccer and making friends with the guys we rode up with from Qosayih, and going to Coptic services in the evenings. The final two weeks we spent back in Qosayih, seeing the kids at Saint Mena again and visiting friends we had made from Anafora. Especially when visiting people's homes, but throughout my time in Egypt, we were treated with incredible hospitality, with people going well out of their way to make us feel welcome.

After being in Egypt then, it was incredibly interesting and at times, concerning, to watch the protests unfold there in recent weeks. Although I certainly heard discontent about the Egyptian government while there, it was surprising to see the courage with which people stood up to the government. As Egypt moves into a more uncertain, but hopefully promising, future, it is also important to recognize the concerns of Christians there about what the new government may look like. After having visited Egypt as a part of SST with Goshen, news events on the television seem much more real in that they impact people I know now. It is impossible to forget the friends I made, and I can only hope and pray that things will be well for them as Egypt begins to take a new shape.

## SPECIAL PROJECT AT CAMP MENNOSCAH

While Camp Mennoscah is owned and operated by Western District Conference, children and others from a number of SCC churches have availed themselves of camping opportunities and other programs at the camp. A Retreat Commission, with members elected by WDC delegates, functions as the governing body for the camp with regular meetings. They have invited SCC to name one or two persons to function with the Retreat Commission to reinforce support for continued, and even broadened, SCC congregations' participation. Darrin Hiebert, a member at Whitestone Mennonite Church, is filling this role at present.

A study is currently underway to determine the feasibility of creating a separate nonprofit corporation to manage the camp's operations. Part of that consideration is the possibility of including two persons from South Central Conference on the governing body.



Those with any knowledge of or history with the camp are aware of the inadequacy of the swimming pool, both in terms of size and condition. The challenges have reached the point that a decision has been made to raze the old pool and replace it with a new, larger one, with a completion date scheduled for early June 2011, when the summer camping season begins. The cost of the project is about \$400,000, of which the first \$100,000 was committed through a long-range fundraising project by Western District, known as Vision 2012. The balance is being solicited from churches, foundations and individuals. Donations may be sent to WDC, P.O. Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117. It is also possible to donate on line at [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org), using the Camp link.

## 2011 FAMILY FESTIVAL

Planning is underway for the annual meeting of South Central Conference, referred to as the Family Festival as an indication of the focus on programs and activities that will appeal to all ages. The dates are June 10-12, and the location will be Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston. For those interested, there will be a golf outing at the Hesston golf course on Friday afternoon. A chicken barbecue supper on Friday evening will kick off the weekend activities. Other features will include worship services, a delegate session for essential decision-making, workshops, a women's lunch, a talent show, a coffeehouse, child care and activities for infants through junior high. The weekend will conclude with the Sunday morning worship service.

### "Investing in Hope"

The theme for this conference will be "Investing in Hope: Planning Together for a Christ-Centered Future," with Ervin Stutzman, Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA as the principal resource person. Ervin is spending all of 2011 and the early part of 2012, participating in many of the 21 area conferences' annual meetings, sharing a message of encouragement and challenge related to the theme. He is also writing a monthly column in *The Mennonite* periodical, developing some aspect of the theme of hope. To quote Ervin, "*I sincerely believe that God is saying that it is time for our church to focus outward, investing in hope for people beyond ourselves.*"

Detailed program information, including registration material, will be made available to every congregation, and on the conference website, in due time. Congregations should be thinking about their delegate representation at the Family Festival; all pastors and one other person for every 25 members or fraction thereof constitute the delegate body. However, the program is designed for a much wider audience, with the majority of the schedule devoted to times of worship, celebration, fellowship and learning. Young adults are especially encouraged to attend to broaden their familiarity with the next level of the church—the area conference which for us consists of 14 congregations in the northern region and 8 in south Texas.

The Program Planning Committee consists of Kurt Horst and Rick Weaver from Whitestone; Michele Miller Sharp from Hesston Mennonite; Frank

Brenneman from Spring Valley; Stephanie Zucconi from Hesston College; and Bill Zuercher, staff.

## STORIES OF INVESTING IN HOPE

As Ervin Stutzman spends time with area conferences and congregations throughout Mennonite Church USA, he is collecting stories of hope from conferences, congregations and individuals. He is compiling these online and is making them available for anyone to read. Through this message, we invite any of our readers to contribute their own stories, which we will willingly share in a future issue of *The Messenger*. Send stories to [billz@sccmenno.org](mailto:billz@sccmenno.org).

### Pastor/Congregation News

**Correction:** The last issue of the Conference Messenger identified Isaac Landis, **Whitestone Mennonite Church's** new Associate Pastor of Youth and Young Adults, as having come from Souderton Mennonite Church. The correct reference should have been Franconia Mennonite Church in Telford, Pennsylvania.

**Hesston Mennonite Church and Hesston College** hosted a weekend event on March 18-19 featuring two persons with extensive experience in dealing with disaster preparedness and management with a particular focus on collaboration between governmental agencies and nonprofit groups, including church bodies. They were David Myers, former pastor of Whitestone Mennonite Church and now Director of the US Department of Homeland Security's Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and Kevin King, Executive Director of the bi-national Mennonite Disaster Service. See separate article for details.

**Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church**, Harper, Kansas, scheduled a weekend with Alan and Eleanor Kreider on March 11-12, for their annual Spring Mission Series. See separate article for details.

Ryan Kopper, pastor of youth and young adult ministry at **Hesston Mennonite Church**, and his wife Sarah welcome Jenna Grace into their family, born on March 8.

**Spring Valley Mennonite Church** hosted its annual Valentine's banquet on February 13, filling its fellowship hall with church members, neighbors and friends for a festive meal and storytelling by Leroy Hershberger from Partridge, Kansas.

**Whitestone Mennonite Church** will have a special celebration on April 3. They have the pleasure of burning a note that was signed several years ago to finance a major addition and renovation project. With the impetus of some challenge gifts providing matching funds, and a bequest, the congregation has been able to retire the note several years ahead of schedule. A chicken barbecue lunch will kick off the celebration, to be followed by an auction sponsored by the MYF to provide funds for the trip to Pittsburgh in July to attend the MC USA youth convention.

Marion Bontrager, Bible instructor at Hesston College, spent a week in **south Texas** in early January, teaching the abbreviated version of his Biblical Literature course required of all college students. Two geographic clusters of four churches each provided the audience for his teaching. He was accompanied by Hesston College freshman Robert Howell.

## COLLEGE NEWS

**T**he **Goshen College** Dean's List for the 2010-11 fall semester included Benjamin Wade Baumgartner, son of Jeff and Gail Baumgartner of Hesston, who is a junior studying Bible and religion. He attends Whitestone Mennonite Church. Ben spent the fall semester in Egypt for his Study-Service Term, about which he wrote in a separate article elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Hesston College** has announced the Commencement speaker for the May 8 program. That will be Regina Shands Stoltzfus, who is Assistant Professor of Peace, Justice and Conflict Studies at Goshen College. Her daughter Rachel is a freshman at Hesston College this year.

**Hesston College** is hosting a team of four persons from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association [accrediting

body] on March 21-23, who are doing the site visit that precedes a decision on continuing accreditation. Staff have been at work for nearly two years, preparing a self-study report of 300 pages that provides the material in preparation for the site visit. Earlier in the year, the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission reviewed the nursing program and extended its accreditation for the maximum period with no qualifications.

**Hesston College's** Board of Overseers approved the plan to do major upgrading of the Erb Central and West dormitories, which will begin immediately following Commencement on May 8. The total cost of \$4.5 million will be funded through a bond issue of \$1.5 million, and contributed funds of \$3 million, for which a fundraising campaign is in full swing. Much of the improvement will be invisible, involving infrastructure upgrades and replacements. Other components include new floor covering, furniture and furnishings, windows and roof. As a residential college, the attractiveness and functionality of the home to over 300 students becomes a high priority.

**Goshen College's** radio station WGCS 91.1FM-The Globe isn't a huge operation, but the sounds coming out of it are making a big impact. Competing against every college and university in the country of all sizes, the student-operated station was named this year's Best College Station in the Nation on March 12 at the 71st Annual Conference of the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System [IBS] in New York City. Read the complete story at



<http://www.goshen.edu/news/pressarchive/03-17-11-radio-station593.html>

## FEDERAL FAITH-BASED LEADER VISITS HESSTON COLLEGE

**D**avid Myers, director of the US Department of Homeland Security's Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (CFNP), visited Hesston College March 18-20, discussing partnership between the government and faith-based and other nonprofit

organizations with the college campus and the local community. Kevin King, Executive Director of Mennonite Disaster Service, joined Myers in several presentations.

David Myers was pastor of Whitestone Mennonite Church from 1983-86 after graduating from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Appointed by President Obama, Myers leads his staff to build, sustain and improve effective partnerships between the federal government, primarily through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), with which Kansas MDS folks became well acquainted nearly 4 years ago during the aftermath of the Greensburg tornado. He has personally led CFNP efforts at major disasters, working closely with senior government, state, local, faith-based and voluntary groups.

On Friday evening, March 18, Myers and King addressed the strengths and weaknesses of government/church partnerships and relationships. An axiom found to ring true is that "disasters make good neighbors," and it is in disaster response that church and state relationships find their highest expression. Federal and state agencies known as VOAD—Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters—are a key group in bringing groups together in response to disasters. Their work is greatly facilitated by Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VAL), of which there are ten serving in as many districts in the US. David observed that his status as an ordained Mennonite pastor has opened many doors of communication and service.

On Saturday morning, Myers and King gave examples of the ways that faith-based organizations and government can work together in disasters. They noted that there are barriers that have to be overcome, beginning with the reality that the federal government has vast resources compared to the much-smaller voluntary agencies. Finding avenues of access to those resources can be a challenge, especially when disasters strike they require immediate mobilization of manpower and money. The government's "command and control" style of operating is very different from agencies which rely almost totally on volunteers. There are also cultural differences, related to the vocabulary used, the pace and speed of response, and the nature of federal funding allocations that may be temporary.

The session concluded with agreement that positive relationships are the key, and those have to be cultivated both locally and nationally well ahead of the time disaster response is required. Persons present were challenged to check on their own church or family disaster planning and preparation, made especially timely in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

## Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church Spring Mission Series

Our world is changing, fast. Christianity no longer has the influence over our world that it once did. What does it mean to faithfully worship God in this new world? What does it mean to be the church when the mission field is no longer a world away, but across the street? And how are these things woven together?

These and other questions were addressed by Alan and Eleanor Kreider on Saturday, March 12th at the Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, KS. The Kreiders are from Elkhart, Indiana, and were long-term missionaries under the former Mennonite Board of Missions, now Mennonite Mission Network, in London, England. They were instrumental in organizing and supporting the Anabaptist Network in Great Britain. The focus of their messages was based on their just-published book, *Worship and Mission after Christendom*.

The term worship is an abbreviated form of worth-ship, suggesting that we worship God because God is worthy. True worship encompasses all of life, integrating our entire being, and finds its highest expression in a corporate setting. What we prize (worship) is what we praise. We become like the "idol" we worship. We become like the God we worship. In worship, we tell the salvation history story—a vital activity which determines how we participate in God's activity. Telling that story ascribes worth to God. In worship, we are changed, by our encounter with God.

The meaning of mission has evolved over the generations. The classic mission model identifies the church or a mission agency as the sender, typically in overseas settings, with specialized, long-term missionaries who

introduced a personal salvation leading to the building of churches. The Mission of God (*missio Dei*) model identifies God as the sender, naming every Christian everywhere as the agents of mission, whose goal is to join God's purpose of reconciling all things in Christ. The gospel thus proclaimed, and lived, is holistic: it holds together salvation with discipleship, spiritual work with secular work, mission with peace, sharing our faith with peacemaking/reconciliation, and caring for creation.

Christendom is the term that describes that situation in which the church and civil society were melded into a single entity. When that happened, mission disappeared. The functioning of Christendom is the "Christian" counterpart to what we know as the Muslim's sharia law. It was when Christendom declined, and the church accepted its separation from the state, that mission "erupted" and became a vital force again in the lives of Christian believers.

The Kreiders' presentation concluded with the affirmation that we need to tell God's story because we are surrounded by other persons' stories. In worship, our stories have four characteristics: they embody upside down strategies; they assume that God is present and active; they make a claim on, and change, the storyteller; and they exemplify a spirit of hopefulness.

## BENEFIT FOR HOPI MISSION SCHOOL

**A** number of our churches and individuals have collected Campbell's product labels and General Mills Boxtops for Education for many years for Hopi Mission School. Since 1995, the school has purchased three vans, paid for totally with Campbell's label credits. The most recent was a 7-passenger Dodge Grand Caravan, purchased in May 2003 with 1,100,000 label credits. A similar van now costs 1,600,000 label credits. The school currently has a balance of about 1,100,000 credits.

A recent development enables collectors to accelerate the accumulation of points. Heretofore, the labels had to be collected and sent to the school, where they were processed and sent in to Campbell's. Now it is possible for persons all over America to register their supermarket club cards on

line in Hopi Mission School's name; most major food store chains are participating. Whenever any eligible products are purchased, credit automatically is registered to the school's account. IN ADDITION, the actual labels can continue to be collected and sent to the school, which provides a double credit.

In our area, Dillons is the participating supermarket. To register, go online at [www.elabelsforeducation.com](http://www.elabelsforeducation.com), and enter your Dillons club card number, with Hopi Mission School as the designated beneficiary. The school's address to be entered is P.O. Box 39, Kykotsmovi, AZ 86039. You can find the latest list of eligible products by accessing the school's website, at [www.hopimissionschool.org](http://www.hopimissionschool.org), and click on the Labels for Education link.

Boxtops for Education are still very useful. Each of them can be redeemed for ten cents.

## SCC Mennonite Women

*by Nancy Peachey, President.*

**W**omen of South Central Conference and also, Western District Conference Women in Mission met at Journey at Yoder on March 7&8 for the annual Comforter Blitz for the benefit of Mennonite Central Committee. On the two days, attendance was 265, and 140 comforters were completed. A number of women from the western Kansas group were unable to attend due to snow, but requested that comforter tops and supplies be sent to them to complete in their location. Our thanks go to the women of the Friends of MCC Committee who organized this successful and enjoyable event. Stories were shared of the needs where the comforters are distributed, and the joy with which they are received.

The annual Spring Supper was held Thursday, March 17, at Journey at Yoder, near Yoder, Kansas. The speaker was Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, entertaining and dynamic storyteller, speaking on "Women Who Light the Way". The meeting was co-sponsored by Western District Mennonite Women in Mission.

## SAVE THE DATE

**S**aturday, June 11, 2011 Women's Luncheon at South Central Conference Family Festival in the Community Room at Whitestone

Mennonite Church in Hesston, KS. The featured speaker will be Laura Stoltzfus, a veteran of 17 years working in missions in the Ukraine. Laura's topic is about The Joy of Witnessing and Discipling New Believers in the Ukraine. Laura is the parent of 4 young children along with her husband, Joey Stoltzfus, a student at Hesston College. Watch for the sign-up sheet in your congregation.

July 4-9 Church-wide Convention, Pittsburgh, PA, includes a Luncheon and program organized by MW USA

September 9, 10 & 11, 2011 Annual Women and Girls' Retreat at Camp Mennoscah for South Central Conference Mennonite Women and Western District Conference Women in Mission. We encourage women in the congregations to organize groups of girls to bring to the Retreat, either family or church groups.

November 12 & 13 Sister Care Training planned by MC USA Mennonite Women Board, and Berni Kaufman, our staff in the Newton office. Place to be announced.



One of the projects of the Mennonite Women's group of South Hutchinson Mennonite Church is the making of caps for newborns at the local hospital, a way to make a contribution in the life of the community. Pictured are Joan Barb and Shirley Hostetler.

## Do You Know?

*From the Conference Resource Advocate Joyce Zuercher*

**D**o you need more ideas for doing outreach? Mennonite Publishing Network has a number of resources for you.

The **Close to Home** pamphlets are designed to help people deal with difficult personal issues, such as gambling, eating disorders, depression, bullying,

infertility, overwhelming debt, and a dozen more issues. The pamphlets are inexpensive at \$.75 apiece, and you can be creative about placing them in public places as well as in your church. Reports say that rest room placements are successful, as people can take them privately. Consider waiting rooms; ask doctors and dentists, etc., for permission. Free study guides are available for download, for classes or small group study, at [www.mpn.net/closetohome](http://www.mpn.net/closetohome). If the pamphlets are made available in public places, include the name, address, and telephone number of your church.

Instead of putting outdated Faith and Life periodicals in the recycle bin, recycle them by making them available to others. Persons in retirement facilities, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers will appreciate copies of **Rejoice**, **Purpose**, or **Timbrel**. They can also be offered to medical offices, and other waiting rooms.

Another outreach opportunity is just around the corner—Vacation Bible School! **Taste and See, God is Good!** is the 2011 theme, as children learn to look at food through the eyes of faith. The stories include the manna in the wilderness, the widow sharing her last oil and flour with the prophet, and Jesus offering himself as bread and wine.

You can use this curriculum for Bible School or for a 12 week midweek or kids club plan. It comes in a boxed set and/or items purchased separately. Go to [www.mpn.net/vbs](http://www.mpn.net/vbs) to find sample sessions, a complete order form, free graphics and more.

And speaking of kids' clubs, the Kids Can Club series is being developed as a series of flexible, all in one resources for multiple settings, such as midweek, camp, Sunday night, etc., activities. **Kids Can Make Peace** and **Kids Can Dig the Bible** are available now, and **Kids Can Build Bridges** is in production for use at the children's program at Pittsburgh 2011. Find out more by going to [www.mpn.net/kidscanclub](http://www.mpn.net/kidscanclub).

And, what about radio ministry? Third Way Media has developed **Shaping Families**, a 15-minute series of radio programs and a 24/7 website. If the programs are available in your area, help to publicize them. If not, consider helping to make them available. The programs are also available on CD, which could be used for Sunday School classes, to share with shut-ins or for inspirational listening as you drive. Find out about these resources at [www.ShapingFamilies.com](http://www.ShapingFamilies.com). MPN and Third Way Media are in the process of joining forces, allowing them to share technology and space.

## Calendar

- March 24 7 pm, Corn (OK) Bible Academy  
Choir program, Whitestone  
Mennonite Church
- March 26 8:15am, Business Leaders and  
Pastors: Partners in Leadership  
and Ministry? at Prairie View,  
Newton, KS
- March 28-30 Mennonite Church USA  
Constituency Leaders Council  
semi-annual meeting, Archbold,  
Ohio
- March 29 7 pm, Conversation on “What is the  
future of Sunday School?” WDC  
offices, North Newton, KS
- April 8-9 Kansas MCC Relief Sale,  
Hutchinson, Kansas, Fairgrounds
- April 10 7 pm, Kansas Mennonite Men’s  
Chorus program, Bethel College  
Memorial Hall
- April 17 7 pm, Kansas Mennonite Men’s  
Chorus program, Buhler High  
School Gymnasium
- May 8 Hesston College commencement
- June 10-12 SCC Family Festival, Whitestone  
Mennonite Church, Hesston
- July 4-9 MC USA Biennial Convention,  
Pittsburgh, PA

